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NOAA PROVIDES FUNDING FOR WASHINGTON STATE HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECTS

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has provided $359,000 for nine directly-funded community-based restoration projects in Washington State. The projects are designed to restore habitats for marine and anadromous fish, endangered species, and other living marine resources. The projects were funded by the Community-Based Restoration Program in NOAA's Restoration Center under the National Marine Fisheries Service.

"These habitat restoration projects show how local organizations can play a crucial role in the recovery and long-term sustainability of salmon and steelhead in Washington," said Bob Lohn, NOAA Fisheries Northwest Regional Administrator. "The overwhelming community support and involvement that these projects have behind them are some of the most important ingredients in successful habitat restoration efforts."

The Community-Based Restoration Program is a financial and technical federal assistance program in the NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation It promotes strong partnerships at the national, regional and local level to fund grassroots, community-based activities. Projects restore living marine resources and their habitats, and promote stewardship and a conservation ethic. NOAA Restoration Center staff work closely with local communities to aid in project development and implementation.

Coastal and marine resources that benefit from the program include commercial and recreational fishery species, endangered and threatened species, and marine mammals; and habitats such as marshes, seagrass beds, estuaries and other habitats that support these organisms. The nine restoration projects funded in Washington are found throughout Puget Sound. They focus on riparian restoration, and shoreline and nearshore habitat enhancements.

Pierce County

- NOAA awarded a $21,000 grant to the Friends of the Hylebos to restore a 3-acre site through which the East Branch of Hylebos Creek flows. The site is one-quarter mile downstream from the East Hylebos Creek ravine, a 1.4-mile stretch of forested stream that contains some of the best remaining salmon habitat along the east branch. Restoration activities include placing large woody debris in the creek and associated wetlands, planting native trees and shrubs, and removing concrete retaining walls from the streambank.

These actions will provide wildlife habitat, increase stream complexity, and restore a more natural channel.

"The Community-Based Restoration Program grant made it possible to expand the scope of this project to include more community members and to produce greater stream and wetlands restoration. It was the yeast that made the bread rise." Chris Carrel, Executive Director, Friends of the Hylebos Wetlands

- NOAA awarded a $30,000 grant to the YMCA Tacoma-Pierce County Chapter to enhance and restore 1,300 feet of riparian and nearshore habitat in the Lackey Creek estuary and adjacent shoreline. The project will remove a bulkhead from the estuary, recontour the shoreline, and revegetate the stream banks to promote forage and shelter for salmon. Lackey Creek supports several fish species.

  "This project represents an exciting combination of community volunteers, environmental education, and stewardship of property on Puget Sound. We are excited to be a part of enhancing and restoring a small part of this shoreline area in partnership with NOAA." Bob Gratias, Program Director, YMCA Camp Seymour

- NOAA awarded a $40,000 grant to the South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group for two salmon habitat restoration projects, one of which is in Pierce County. This project involves removal of a small dam designed as a water retention facility for a water wheel. The spillway is a barrier for salmon at some flow levels. Once it's removed, a fish ladder will be constructed, eliminating the last remaining obstacle to anadromous fish passage on Clover Creek, a tributary of Steilacoom Lake and Chambers Creek.

  "Not only do these NOAA-supported projects achieve direct results by providing access to valuable habitat, but the indirect value associated with the involvement of local volunteers, and the stewardship ethic we hope they take away with them, is incalculable." Lenore Jensen, Project Coordinator, South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group

Snohomish County

- NOAA awarded an $18,000 grant to Northwest Chinook Recovery to further restoration efforts along Haskell Slough in Monroe. Those efforts are recovering a river channel for salmon to use for rearing, over-wintering, and spawning. This is being done by reopening the slough and reconnecting it to the Skykomish River, and by placing woody debris in the stream, planting trees on the banks, and long-term monitoring.

  "We've been fortunate to have such an immediate and overwhelmingly positive ecological response to our restoration efforts along Haskell Slough. NOAA's Restoration Center has been instrumental in our restoration successes and consistently supportive in achieving the goals of benefitting our marine resources." John Sayre, Executive Director, Northwest Chinook Recovery

Clallam County

- NOAA awarded a $30,000 grant to Sequim School District No. 323 for salmon habitat enhancement along the Dungeness River. School district students will plant and monitor 40,000 three-year-old Douglas fir trees along the riverbank. Student activities will encompass planning, mapping, collecting baseline data, removing invasive vegetation, planting and maintenance, and ongoing monitoring.

  "Our students are already learning to make water measurements and vegetation measurements, and are learning what it takes to protect our sensitive marine resources. They are the future of our conservation effort." Alan Carmen, Teacher, Sequim School District No. 323

Mason County

- NOAA awarded a $40,000 grant to the South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group for two salmon habitat restoration projects, one of which is in Mason County. A barrier culvert near the town of Allyn will be replaced with a bottomless structure to provide unrestricted fish passage. Conifers will be planted along the stream banks to provide a future source of large woody debris, and to provide stream cover and consistent temperatures. Removal of the barrier will ensure passage of anadromous fish to more than two miles of available habitat.

  "NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program was invaluable in providing resources for two on-the-ground projects that return salmon-bearing streams to more natural conditions. The grant from NOAA/CRP provides matching funds necessary to leverage monies

from other sources such as the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and better enables our small non-profit group to request any remaining necessary funds from other local entities." Lenore Jensen, Project Coordinator, South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group

Jefferson County

- NOAA awarded a $60,000 grant to the Northwest Maritime Center to improve and expand eelgrass habitat beneath and around a dock used for educational on-the-water programs. The project will use targeted eelgrass transplanting and the newest dock construction technologies to create a demonstration project with scientific and educational merit, showing how over-water structures can minimize their impacts on the habitats and marine life below.
  "NOAA funding brings together an innovative partnership of on-the-water users, marine scientists and regulatory agencies, as well as marine educational organizations to undertake a eelgrass restoration project and to design an environmentally sensitive dock that, when constructed will become an educational facility itself, providing hands-on opportunities for studying and monitoring the rich marine laboratory underneath and adjacent to this demonstration dock." David Robison, Executive Director, Northwest Maritime Center

Puget Sound-Wide

- NOAA awarded a $50,000 grant to the Puget Sound Restoration Fund to conduct Olympia oyster restoration throughout the sound. The goals are to establish naturally-spawning populations by planting 800,000 oysters in a minimum of 10 sites; strengthen long-term community stewardship of oysters; and evaluate the success of oyster-seeding methods.
  "The NOAA grant gives a huge boost to native oyster restoration efforts in Washington State and supports strong collaboration between the state, tribes, commercial oyster farmers, the community and the federal government." Betsy Peabody, Executive Director, Puget Sound Restoration Fund

- NOAA awarded a $75,000 grant to the Washington State Department of Ecology's Northwest Straits Commission to conduct a pilot project to locate, photograph, and map derelict and abandoned fishing gear in northern Puget Sound and the Straits of Juan de Fuca, followed by removal and disposal. It's been demonstrated that derelict gear is significantly impacting marine life.
  "The Commission is excited to lead this effort to stop the needless killing of marine fish, shellfish, birds and mammals and we appreciate NOAA's recognition of this ongoing problem by funding this pilot project." Tom Cowan, Northwest Straits Commission.

The NOAA Community-Based Restoration Program (CRP) has been working with community organizations since 1996 to support effective habitat restoration projects in marine, estuarine and riparian areas across the nation. The NOAA-funded projects provide strong on-the-ground habitat restoration components that offer educational and social benefits for people and their communities, in addition to long-term ecological benefits for fishery resources. More than 350 projects in 25 states have been implemented using NOAA funding and leveraged funding from the program's national and regional habitat restoration partners.

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA fisheries) is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources through scientific research, management, enforcement, and conservation of marine mammals and other protected marine species and their habitat. To learn more about NOAA fisheries, visit http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov

For more information on the NOAA Community-Based Restoration Program, go to: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration